3. SOME VEDDA ARTS AND A DANCE

EDIBLE LIME

321 296 [237] THE Vedda method of making from snail-shells an edible lime, the concomitant of a betel or bark chew, is interesting. Four varieties of snail afford it :—The large, white, land snails (*wantako* or *godang bello*) ; the small, black, river snails (*alang bello* or *gadu bello*), found in dry stream beds ; the bivalved *ethal bello* ; and the convoluted *kankuro* or *lanu bello*.

The *wantako* give the best lime. Six to twelve of their shells are dropped into a small fire, and a layer of dry twigs is laid over them. The flame is now vigorously fanned with a leafy sprig, to prevent the shells getting charred. When the overlying layer of twigs is reduced to embers, and the shells glow white, they are gently picked off with a stick, taken on the palm and placed in a large leaf (*kenda* or *halmilla*). A little water is then added or, in its absence, saliva ! The leaf is quickly folded over the shells which now disintegrate and " ripen." They are then smashed up with the fingers, and the chunam is distributed.

When the small *gadu bello* are used, the process is slightly different : the burnt shells, moistened and bundled in a leaf as before, are replaced on the embers quietened down with a sprinkling of water. The chunam from these is coarser and more gritty than that from the *wantako*.

FIRE MAKING

372 Fire is obtained by jungle folk in a variety of ways. When gun-powder is to hand there is a choice of two methods : (*a*) A little powder is placed on a stone and closely surrounded with small fragments of cloth or tree cotton. It is then ignited, and the rag set on fire, by striking it sharply with an axe-head previously warmed by rubbing on a rock. (*b*) When, in addition to powder, a cap is available, the powder is put into a small square of rag with the upturned cap in its centre. Into the cap the point of a knife is inserted, and the rag is closed over and clapsed firmly against the blade. The striking of this on a stone explodes the cap, ignites the powder, and lights the rag.

These methods being too wasteful for routine use, the commonest mode of fire-making in the jungles is by means of a C-shape iron strike-a-light (*gini-katuwa*) and a piece of chert or crystalline quartz (*irimana gal*), against which is a piece of *kitul* cotton or rag to take the spark when the two are struck together.

The most primitive, and essentially Vedda, art of making fire is by the attrition of two sticks. Although I had hitherto travelled much in Ceylon forests, always making inquiries about this mode of obtaining [184] fire, it was not until I came to Bingoda that I was able to see it done, and that with astonishing ease. In Henebedde and Bintenne the art was dead ; indeed some of the Veddas had never even heard of it !

The light *velang* stick of which arrows are made is the wood *par excellence* for fire making. Elephants being fond of the tree, the dry